



Press Release

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By: Maj. Randall Stillinger, 36th Combat Aviation Brigade

Alaska Guardsmen re-enlist aboard Navy ship in Persian Gulf on Sept. 11

USS Monterey, Persian Gulf— Four Guardsmen from Wasilla re-enlisted in the Alaska Army National Guard on Wednesday while aboard the USS Monterey (CG-61) in the Persian Gulf.

Sgt. 1st Class George Koval, Sgt. 1st Class Julie Small, Sgt. Kurt Miller and Sgt. Amber Hillman, all members of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, are deployed to the Middle East with the 1-189th General Support Aviation Battalion, 36th Combat Aviation Brigade.

The Guardsmen are deployed to Camp Buehring in Kuwait for nine months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. They were aboard the Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser to conduct Deck Landing Qualifications with the company's UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters.

The training is part of ongoing, joint Army-Navy operations which provides security in the region and the free flow of maritime traffic in the gulf. Of particular importance is the Strait of Hormuz between the United Arab Emirates and Iran, which is crucial to the export of oil to the world market.

Sgt. 1st Class Koval serves as a Platoon Sergeant in the company, which has been in Kuwait since April.

"I re-enlisted because this country needs people who still believe in her and are willing to sacrifice everything for everyone," Koval said. "I am extremely proud to do what I do and at a time in history when it really means a lot."

Soldiers often request a special location or a certain way to conduct the re-enlistment ceremony in order to make it unique and memorable. It's also a reward for excellent work and service to country, Koval stated.

Sgt. Hillman, a UH-60 crew chief, said that being on the Navy ship was awesome as it made the re-enlistment so much more special, out in the middle of the gulf with her extended family.

The significance of being deployed to the Middle East on the anniversary of the worst terrorist act on American soil was on these Soldiers' minds.

Sgt. Miller, who also serves as a crew chief, said, "I was glad to re-enlist on the anniversary because it is not only a commitment to the military, but also a commitment to service to our nation."

Getting the chance to work on board Navy ships is a new experience for these Army Soldiers.

"It was great to be on the Monterey and see so many crewmembers working to make the ship run well," Miller said.

Capt. Nathan Cornilles, of Eagle River, serves as the Alpha Company Commander. He said that he's proud of the commitment they have made to serve our country, and draws strength from them for choosing to make 9/11 a day that they reaffirm that dedication.

While the mission is first and foremost, life at home thousands of miles away in Wasilla remains on their minds.

Sgt. 1st Class Small, who is married with three children, said "Thank you to all of my family and friends who have shown their support and love throughout this entire deployment." Small's husband and one of her daughters also serve in the U.S. military.

The company will return to their home base at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage this winter.

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Cutlines:

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A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, comes in for approach onto the flight deck of the USS Monterey (CG-61) during training in the Persian Gulf. The company, which is currently deployed to the Middle East in Support of Operation Enduring Freedom, is from the Alaska Army National Guard. (U.S. Army by Sgt. Mark Scovell/Released)

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Alaska Army National Guardsmen Sgt. Kurt Miller, left, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, recites the oath of re-enlistment to Maj. Michael Blades while aboard the USS Monterey (CG-61) in the Persian Gulf, Sept. 11, 2013. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mark Scovell/Released)

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Alaska Army National Guardsmen assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, recite the re-enlistment oath while aboard the USS Monterey (CG-61) in the Persian Gulf, Sept. 11, 2013. Reciting the oath are, from left to right, Sgt. 1st Class George Koval, Sgt. 1st Class Julie Small and Sgt. Amber Hillman. 1st Lt. Dean Burgess and Capt. Bradley Hoppes are holding the flag. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Terry Symonds recites the oath of enlistment. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mark Scovell/Released)